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FM AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 8614
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 4995
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL PRIORITY 9079
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 8610
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 3718
RUEHKP/AMCONSUL KARACHI PRIORITY 0258
RUEHLH/AMCONSUL LAHORE PRIORITY 5998
RUEHPW/AMCONSUL PESHAWAR PRIORITY 4805
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO PRIORITY 4335
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L ISLAMABAD 002904

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PK](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [CH](#)

SUBJECT: TALIBAN KIDNAP CHINESE ENGINEERS FROM THE NWFP

REF: PESHAWAR 436

Classified By: Anne W. Patterson for reasons 1.4 (b), (d).

¶1. (U) Taliban spokesman Muslim Khan claimed on September 2 the Taliban were holding two Chinese nationals and two Pakistanis as leverage to force the GOP to stop military action against militants. Two Chinese engineers went missing from Shal Plam in the Lower Dir District of the Northwest Frontier Province (NWFP) with their Pakistani driver and guard August 29. Police officials on August 31 launched three investigation teams and a major search operation to find the Chinese telecommunications engineers and the Pakistani guard and driver.

¶2. (C) Pakistan's Interior Minister Rehman Malik announced on September 1 that the telecommunications engineers had been targeted and abducted, but refused to speculate which group took the engineers, according to a Pakistani press conference covered by Chinese media. However, Malik told Ambassador September 2 that they had been abducted by militants from Swat and he feared at least one victim was dead. The Associated Press of Pakistan on the same day reported that local tribesmen held a jirga and agreed to support the local administration to recover the engineers safely.

¶3. (C) Chinese nationals have repeatedly been targeted for kidnapping and killings by al-Qaeda, the Taliban and even Baloch separatists. The reasons have ranged from attempts to embarrass a GOP that considers China its most reliable ally to complaints that the Chinese are taking jobs away from Pakistanis. The July 2007 Lal Masjid (Red Mosque) operation was launched only after militants abducted Chinese nationals from a business in Islamabad. There have been repeated protests over Chinese workers who were hired rather than Balochis to build the Gwadar port. In addition to defense and telecom businesses and assistance projects in Balochistan and the NWFP, the Chinese are expanding the Karakoram Highway.

¶4. (C) The Chinese Embassy reports there are over 4,000 Chinese workers in country; many are under special GOP protective details. The Chinese ambassador told DCM in mid-August that Beijing remains very concerned about political stability in Pakistan and had received only mixed support from the Pakistanis on counter-terrorism cooperation against militants in the Xinjiang Province of China. Local press reported September 3 that the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokeswoman has urged Pakistan to rescue the engineers.

15. (C) Comment: Kidnappings in the NWFP are increasingly common, and the successful February 11 kidnapping of the Pakistani ambassador to Afghanistan has upped the ante on foreigners. On August 26, the U.S. Consul General in Peshawar was attacked in what may have been an attempted kidnapping (reftel).

PATTERSON